Community Contact

Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

November/December 2009

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In 2011, Bissett, Manitoba celebrates 100 years since a prospector found gold near the boreal forested north shore of Rice Lake in Precambrian shield country east of Lake Winnipeg.

Manitoba

This Issue

Welcome to the November/ December 2009 *Community Contact* newsletter.

The theme for this issue of *Community Contact* is community. We look at what makes a community special to its residents and we learn how some people help make their communities places to call home. A majority of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities have fewer than 200 people. With such small populations, successful local events often mobilize the whole community's support and participation.

Located in picturesque boreal-forested country on the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg, Bissett, Manitoba is an example of one ANA community that has made an effort to recognize some of the people who have made it the terrific community it still is to live, work and play in. In this issue, we take a brief look at the history of Bissett and we tell you about some of the community's most honoured, explaining how the community has recognized them. Our profile of the community of Bissett is followed with a report on how the community recently showed appreciation for the completion of fire training by their volunteer fire fighters.

Along with these articles, we recap the Northern Harvest Forum, a two-day event held in Thompson on October 21 and 22, with a focus on food security and sharing local growing practices. We continue with a special look at our Dreamcatcher award recipient from the ANA community of Cross Lake, one of five from across Canada who received the award this year.

Closing out this issue are seasonal greetings from the minister of Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern affairs, and a municipal calendar with reminders for the months of December 2009 and January 2010.

Enjoy this issue and please feel free to contact us with your comments, pictures and article suggestions, or to request additional copies.

Special People

Bissett, Manitoba was named after Dr. E. D. R. Bissett who was a resident physician in Pine Falls and a member of Parliament for the former federal constituency of Springfield between 1926 and 1930. The community is located on the north shore of Rice Lake, about 130 kilometres northeast of Pine Falls. From its beginnings in the early 1930s, Bissett saw its fortunes rise and fall along with the fortunes of the San Antonio gold mine. Of course, the gold mine prompted most people to live and work in Bissett over the years.

Most of the early development of Bissett centered on the gold mine site. The discovery of gold happened well before the 1930s. In fact, the first claim, staked in the area in 1911, was by Major E. A. Pelletier, an inspector in the Royal North West Mounted Police. Bissett will mark the 100th anniversary of its beginnings in 2011.

The original claim was named Gabrielle in honour of a friend of Major Pelletier, and it soon featured the first stamp mill for gold ore refining in Manitoba. Over time, the mine passed through the hands of several owners, opening and closing for various reasons, including the rise and fall of the price of gold. As mine production fluctuated, so did the population of Bissett. During one peak of mining operations, the population numbered over 1,200 people.

Jumping to the present day, the mine, now owned by San Gold Corporation, is still the largest employer in Bissett, but the community council has a long-term goal of sustaining the community if the mine should falter again in the future. Economic development interests the community has been considering include promoting the area as a tourist destination with recreational fishing, hunting and camping. With increasing cottage development in the area, and further gold exploration taking place, the community council will have some time to develop its plans.

Today the population of Bissett stands at 125 full time residents. The current Mayor Doug McPherson, four community councillors and six employees normally handle core community business and day to day services, while many resident volunteers pitch in to make Bissett the special place it is to live and work.

A plaque and artifacts from Manitoba's first stamp mill informs visitors that, in 1914, the gold mine at Rice Lake was the first in the province to process ore and produce gold bricks on site.

Make Bissett Special Place

The W. A. (Bill) McPherson Memorial Community Hall and Curling Rink, Candy Spence Memorial Recreational Facility, Elsie Kacperski Memorial Park and the Hawrysh Memorial Centre, all recently named to remember dedicated Bissett citizens who distinguished themselves through contributions to the community during their lives.

Community Contributors Remembered

In memory of several outstanding community members who have passed away, Bissett recently dedicated and renamed community buildings and recreational areas in their honour. They include:

W. A. (Bill) McPherson

Bill inspired everyone with his endless dedication to his community. He was also an avid curler who spent many hours making and maintaining the curling ice. In his honour , Bissett named the local community hall as The W. A. (Bill) McPherson Memorial Community Hall and Curling Rink.

Elsie Kacperski

Elsie was a spirited woman who gave selflessly to the community. In her memory, the community took great pride in dedicating a community park as The Elsie Kacperski Memorial Park.

Candy Spence

Candy is remembered for her great smile and her enhanced appreciation for the outdoors. In her honour, Bissett dedicated the newly renovated outdoor skating rink as The Candy Spence Memorial Recreational Facility.

Walter Hawrysh

Walter arrived in 1937, established a business and always called Bissett his home. He was known as a true gentleman and a man of faith who was actively involved in the community. To honour Walter, the community renamed the former Bissett United Church as the Hawrysh Memorial Centre.

Bissett Honours
Volunteer Fire Fighters

Like many Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities, the community of Bissett relies on volunteers to staff and run their fire department. A community the size of Bissett with over 120 people has a volunteer fire department with 10 to 12 active volunteers. Eight of these volunteers recently completed the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) Level 1 fire training organized and funded by ANA with instructors from the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC).

(Left to right) Bissett fire fighters Doug McPherson, Roy Bruenger, John Bilcowski, Dave Petznick, Kory Kossack, Debbie Petznick and Mark Norgren receive their NFPA Level 1 training certificates from the OFC's Ken Giersch. Missing is Paul Tytgat. Community members presented a specially decorated cake (inset).

Generally, it takes six to eight full weeks for volunteers to complete the Level 1 training. Bissett chose to do this training over several months in the community, because many of their volunteers worked in various jobs and could not attend training full time. The San Gold mine that employs many of the volunteer fire fighters, helped by allowing their employees paid leave to participate in the training. This was a solution that worked for the community and was supported by ANA and the OFC. As a result, Bissett was able to train eight volunteer fire fighters from a start date in November 2008 with final testing and completion in June 2009.

As a show of appreciation for the hard work and dedication of their fire fighters, Bissett hosted a potluck dinner and special ceremony on September 30 to honour their volunteer fire fighters. During the event, the community council presented each of the fire fighters with a thank you gift for taking steps to help make the community a safer place to live.

Next up was the Bissett Ambulance service who presented hats and pins to the fire fighters. For pursuing emergency technician training to allow him to remain an active member of the Bissett Ambulance Service, Jonathan Friesen received special mention and recognition. As part of the celebrations, the community also retired the helmet of John Bilcowski, who is stepping down as the volunteer fire chief after 21 years of service. The evening ended with the presentation of the NFPA Level 1 training certificates to the volunteers by the OFC.

This was a special event for Bissett as residents and family members were able to participate and show their support to the volunteer fire fighters. Everything, from the cake decorated with a picture of a fire truck and two plastic fire fighters on either side, to the napkins, plates and decorations with a fire fighter theme, helped to show the community's appreciation.

The event was a tremendous demonstration of how a community can show its heart and spirit by taking the time to recognize important contributions by community volunteers, employees or residents. Such events go a long way in making a community a special place to live.

Bissett's volunteer fire fighters trained indoors and outdoors over a period of several months to complete the contents of an intensive training program required to qualify for NFPA Level 1 certification.

2009 Northern Harvest Forum Review

The Northern Healthy Foods initiative helps northerners extend the growing season with plants they can start early and transfer outdoors, and plants that thrive in a greenhouse.

The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative (NHFI) housed and managed by Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) sponsored Food Matters Manitoba, formerly the Manitoba Food Charter, to host the third Northern Harvest Forum in Thompson, Manitoba on October 22 and 23, 2009.

Over 80 northern Manitobans participated in the opportunity to share their stories and engage with experts on local food security projects. The main goal of the forum is to encourage participants to gain practical knowledge from presentations and workshops and share it with people in their home communities.

The Northern Harvest Forum workshops and presentations included:

- Community Healing thru Plants - Audrey Logan, an expert in medicinal plants and *Vitality Gardening Series* star, discussed benefits of therapy through planting and challenges and possibilities of growing plants as a form of healing in northern communities.
- Picking Your Own Wild Foods – Brenda Gaudry of Barrows, Manitoba, subject of Open Your Eyes, a video on traditional medicines and plants, talked about the healing properties of plants found in the boreal forest and the business opportunities they present.
- Engaging Youth in Traditional Foods – Mike Sutherland of Peguis First Nation presented his teachings on hunting and gathering skills with youth and community members.
- Food Preservation Round Robin – Offered on both days of the forum, participants had the opportunity to learn how to smoke meat, preserve and can vegetables, and learn about cold storage techniques. Presenters included Henry McKay of Berens River and Patti Eillers of Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI).
- Gardening Round Robin – Participants had the opportunity to draw from an array of northern gardening experts. Topics included:
  - seed saving
  - extending the growing season
  - potential solutions to northern gardening challenges such as soil
  - fruit and berry crops
  - developing gardening projects in communities
- Presenters included northern agriculture technician Barry Little, Frontier School Division regional co-ordinator Chuck Stensgard and MAFRI fruit crops specialist Anthony Mintenko.
- Grocery Store Virtual Tour – this tour included learning how to make healthier food choices by understanding grocery store marketing and learning how to get useful information from product labels.
- Healthy Cooking – Mildred Thibeault demonstrated recipes using local and garden grown ingredients to help promote healthier cooking at home.

The Forum also included the Northern Harvest Banquet in celebration of World Food Day and presentation of the Manitoba Golden Carrot Awards. Golden Carrot awards are given to individuals or groups who devote their time and energy to creating a more sustainable food system in Manitoba.

Deputy Minister Harvey Bostrom brought greetings to the banquet event on behalf of ANA. Entertainment included the Wabowden Youth Fiddlers and Northern Star Women Singers.

NHFI congratulates Golden Carrot Award nominees Jeff Ashley of Dauphin River, Glady Williams of Hollow Water, Hilda Holstrom of Pelican Rapids, Eleanor Woitowicz of Wabowden and award winner Heather Souter of Camperville for their passion and efforts to improve food security in their communities.

Cross Lake Recreation Director

On October 29, 2009, Florence Blacksmith, recreation director for Cross Lake, received the Dreamcatcher Award during an award gala held at the Hamilton Convention Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. More than 1,300 people attended the Dreamcatcher Award Gala, honouring and celebrating the work of five remarkable Aboriginal Canadians.

Presented by the Dreamcatcher Charitable Foundation, the Dreamcatcher Award nomination is open to any Aboriginal person across Canada who demonstrates leadership and dedication in community development. This year's awards recognized community organizers who have worked with youth or community groups at the grass roots level.

Awards were presented for five categories of community development:

- sports and recreation
- arts and culture
- education
- health
- overall

Only one award was presented in each category and winners were from across Canada. The only Manitoban selected, Florence Blacksmith won the award for the overall category.

In addition to receiving an all-expenses paid trip to Hamilton, Ontario and the prestigious award, Florence was invited to participate in a video biography project that highlighted the recipient's community involvement and success stories. Big Soul Productions flew to Cross Lake from Ontario to create the video, which involved Florence and several other Cross Lake residents. The video was played during the gala, right before the recipients received their awards. Teary-eyed viewers gave grand applause, showing their appreciation for the moving stories by the five recipients who have made significant contributions in their communities.

Charlene Waterman, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs recreation and wellness consultant for the Northern Region, nominated Florence.

"When I heard about this award, I immediately thought of Florence," said Waterman. "She is dedicated, and has shown great leadership in her community. She is motivated to learn new program ideas. She has implemented these ideas into community recreation programming. She has been a great role model in her community and to other northern recreation directors. Florence has brought many opportunities to the residents of Cross Lake," Waterman explained.

The following are some of the activities Florence has provided leadership for with the support and leadership of community council:

- annual Cross Lake Community Camp-out
- annual Spring Youth Carnival
- Swim & Boat Safety course
- CPR & First Aid course
- annual Mother's Day event

wins National Award

- annual Father's Day event
- Elder Day events (held twice a year)
- Canada Day event
- supervises summer students for eight weeks each year

In addition to her role as recreation director, Florence also works as a paramedic. Because of her dedication, people are living healthier and safer lives. Florence lives a healthy lifestyle herself, setting a great example to the people she works with.

Organizing recreational activities in a northern community has many challenges. Florence faces those challenges and has shown that she is able to develop, co-ordinate and lead many successful programs despite many barriers. Florence has a passion for what she does in her community and her leadership creates community spirit.

"I did not expect any award for the work that I do in my community," said Florence. "I just enjoy working with the people. I like to organize activities that keep people occupied in something good instead of them getting into trouble. To receive this award meant so much to me. It is very nice to see that there is an organization that recognizes achievements of Aboriginal people, I am very honoured to be one of them."

Winning this award is a great success for Florence and the community. This success would not be possible without the mentorship and support from Cross Lake's mayor and community council. Florence's success is sure to inspire the people of Cross Lake, other communities in Manitoba and across Canada.

Florence Blacksmith displays her Dreamcatcher award.

For more information on the Dreamcatcher Foundation, visit dcfund.ca

Season's Greetings

On behalf of all Manitobans, I am pleased to extend holiday greetings to members of our province's Aboriginal community as you prepare to celebrate the holiday season.

Welcoming a New Year traditionally gives us a unique opportunity to reflect on our many blessings, as we look forward to the promise the New Year holds. We are very fortunate to live in a province renowned for its cultural diversity, friendly people and irrepressible community spirit. All bring a special richness to the season and the wonderful quality of life we enjoy in Manitoba.

May the warmth of the holidays light your hearts and your homes. Have a safe and happy celebration.

Eric Robinson, Minister
Manitoba Aboriginal
and Northern Affairs

Municipal Calendar for December 2009 and January 2010

December 2009

1 Deadline for receipt of any property tax payments to dept to avoid penalties.

8 Send out tenders for audit contracts for 2009/10.

10 Deadline for application to the Community Wellness and Recreation Fund.

11 **Management Maintenance Systems** - Inspect heat trace and recirculation pumps for operation.

15 Deadline for receipt of payment to Receiver General to avoid penalty.

25 **CHRISTMAS DAY**

31 Install Simply Accounting payroll tax updates.

Community:

- ANNUAL PHYSICAL INVENTORY COUNT must be completed before new year.
- Order T4 forms.
- Initiate preplanning for capital projects that will be applied for at next year's Capital Approval Board (ex: cost sharing possibilities).
- Council should continue to review and revise their Community Management Plan due January 31.
- Submit Municipal Employee Benefits Program (MEBP) form and payment **immediately** after the last pay period.
- If applicable, submit bi-weekly payrolls for the Building Independence Initiative to regional office.

Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Reminders:

- Council to ensure fire extinguishers and first aid kits inspected.
- Council to action items highlighted as corrective action from inspections.
- Does your bulletin board include:
  - WSH policy
  - harassment policy
  - violence policy
  - working alone plan
  - names of first aiders and WSH representatives (employee and management)
- Are first aid kits available in every building?
- Is your Community Prevention Plan updated?

January 2010

1 **NEW YEAR'S DAY**

Deadline for receipt of any property tax payments to dept to avoid penalties.

Prepare new TD1 forms.

4 Update tax tables in Simply Accounting.

Submit for quarterly GST refund.

5 Send out tenders for audit contracts.

6 Submit annual MEBP report to dept.

15 Deadline for receipt of payment to Receiver General to avoid penalty.

29 Submit contracts to dept of auditor selection.

30 Submit 3rd quarter financial statements (Oct. to Dec.).

31 Submit Community Management Plan (includes budget) and minutes of public meeting.

Community:

- Request technical assistance for capital project applications prior to March 31.
- Submit MEBP form and payment no later than seven working days after the last pay period.
- If applicable, submit bi-weekly payrolls for the Building Independence Initiative to regional office.

WSH Reminders:

- Council to ensure fire extinguishers and first aid kits inspected.
- Council to action items highlighted as corrective action from inspections.

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Community council members, community residents and departmental staff are strongly encouraged to submit feedback, comments, questions, suggestions and ideas to the editor.